

# critical digest

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T. M. KRAUSE

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## New York Theatre Diary

Praise of Folly- Blackfriar's Guild 2/23/54. Biography of Thomas More by John McGuire with Vince Harding, Mark Voland, Jayne Helmer. Staged by Dennis Gurney... The Girl in Pink Tights-Hellinger 2/27/54. Shepard Traube and Anthony Farrell present Jerome Chodorov-Joseph Fields musical comedy with Jeanmaire, Charles Goldner, Brenda Lewis and David Atkinson. Based on Romberg music. Dances staged by De Mille.

## Current Theatre Reviews

Ondine-46th St 2/18/54. Enchanting. All the NYC daily critics billed Audrey Hepburn's portrayal of a lovely water-sprite in the Playwrights Company production of Giraudoux play adapted by Maurice Valency as enchanting. Most of them agreed the entire production was the same. Kerr, Herald Tribune, filed the sole con notice fearing that it lacked the real magic of a fairy tale. While Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, filed a mild pro for play which he considers pretty and vaguely pleasing, and not much more. Rave parade lead by Atkinson, Times, who found entire proceedings ideal literature, ideal acting, ideal theatre. Critics agreed that cast was perfect and that Richard Whorf's costumes and Peter Larkin's sets and Alfred Lunt's staging couldn't be better. Compelling, arresting, thoughtful theatre, sums up Coleman, Mirror. Watts, Post, minor complaint was that Mel Ferrer was so common. place as the knight, compared to Miss Hepburn. To McClain, Journal American, the evening was the most enchanting he ever spent out of this world since he can recall. Few of the daily reviewers worried about reading any symbolism into the fairy tale.

The Winner- Morosco 2/17/54. Elmer Rice would have had a much more interesting play if he wrote the entire script, and not just one scene out of four, about the activities of a courtroom. As it stands the Playwrights Company production of the writer's 38th script only garnered one pro vote, McClain, Journal American. His was admittedly reserved in his lone approval. Joan Tetzel, Tom Helmore, Vilma Kurer and Fred O'Neal were okayed by critics, but majority thought script talky and uninteresting. Routine was Atkinson, Times, estimate. Kerr, Herald Tribune, notes that author in his somewhat ambiguous play couldn't make up his mind if it was a comedy or a melodrama. Fairly aimless story with an unsatisfying conclusion, panned Chapman, News. Watts, Post, blames author for not getting around to his play until the final scene. Now the play is mighty loquacious, states Hawkins, WT&S, but it might have had more tension if all set in the courtroom.

## Out of Town Tryouts

By The Beautiful Sea will be a Broadway hit when its shortcomings have been eliminated, predicts Bone, Variety-New Haven. "Hang Up" is the show-stopper in the Shirley Booth musical...The Burning Glass, as it now stands, fails to generate enough heat for 3 acts, and like most English plays which fail here is too talky, sums up Eck, Variety-Hartford. Critic classed it as an intellectual melodrama with some of the hammiest gimmicks seen in some time.

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' Off Broadway '  
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Miss Julia, Strindberg's 3 character drama, is being presented at Green Room Studio, 145 Bleeker week-ends... Thomas Radcliffe's production of The Corn is Green is being presented at Equity Library Theatre Feb 17-21... Haven in the Dark, Paul Nord's drama, will be presented by Originals Only starting March 4... Florida Freibus, Bill Penn and Cynthia Latham are featured in Broadway Chapel Players production of Fry's The Boy With A Cart. Pastoral playlet will be presented at Broadway Tabernacle Church at 5 30 PM April 4, 11 and 18. Tickets may be applied for in writing... Dylan Thomas' Under Milkwood will have its final reading at MHA Feb 23.

The Wise Have Not Spoken added a pair of critical notices to its file on Trio Productions showing. Gros, Variety, rated it a mixture of stirring, vibrant theatre with some pedagogic soapboxing. Greenberg, Show Business, found only the third act important. Both commented on excellent performances.

Yale University's Drama Dept production of The Merry Wives of Windsor done in "original" Elizabethan pronunciations won diverse views from 2 NY reviewers. Atkinson, Times, rated production a merry one, providing a cheerful evening. But Greenberg, Show Business, thought acting woefully weak, and direction overwrought. Scene from production was shown on CBS TV Omnibus Feb 21.

Lambs Club production of Andrew McCullough's The Backbone, presented by Steve Parker and Bernard Hart, was panned as having an overall depressing theme to its army comedy plot which might receive general audience resistance, predicts Jess, Variety.

No Exit, at the Cabaret Theatre, maybe best seen through an alcoholic haze, suggests Rice, Post. Drama editor reports a week-end audience enjoyed itself drinking while watching the arena production of the Sartre play.

Detective Story, Equity Community Theatre, was panned by Rice, Post, and Greenberg, Show Business, as sloppy. Funke, Times, okayed it as rewarding evening.

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' Vaudeville '  
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Loew's State, which has not had any vaudeville since 1947, hopes to present Julius LaRosa for 2 weeks starting April 17. Variety reports singer will get \$21,000 plus. Ella Fitzgerald, Saxon & Herbert, Wells & 4 Fays and Archie Bleyer will support him... New Palace show features Vallis, Nightmares, Henny Nadel, L Blue & Yvette, Appletons, Ross & La Pierre and Fontaines.

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' Theatre Record & Books '  
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Kismet, Percy Faith orchestra (Columbia), won an 81 rating from Billboard. In long run disc could well remain one of the most listenable treatments of the show. Twelve tunes, critic notes, are played in lush style by the orchestra, with no vocals to distract from background.

"The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill" by Edwin Engle (Harvard) fails in its promise to answer the question as to what the playwrights' actual achievement was, rates Krutch, Herald Tribune. The book is content to tell what O'Neill wasn't, though what he was seems more interesting.

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' Theatre TV Comments '  
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WNBC TV series on The Immoralist should pull in the lower priced ticket buyers, Billy Rose predicted to Traube, Variety. Series, stated trade paper critic, gave TV a grownup stature and produced a lively, sometimes crisp discussion that could not help but focus attention on the box-office.

Readers want to know, reports O'Brian, Journal American, what the NBC has to say about the TV code which limits TV commercials to 3 minutes in each 15. Many feel the Rose show was a 15 minute commercial.

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Tune WNBC(NYC) Ben Grauer 7 30 AM day after opening for "CD" quotes of reviews  
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Green Room Department

CRITIC SURVIVAL... Though Chapman, News, has for some time felt as rare as a whooping crane, he now feels the chances for the survival of drama critics are brighter. The species can thank the genius and energy of Norman Nadal, Columbus Citizen, who instead of starving quietly is moving Columbus readers, via a "Show Train" to the professional theatre. At the same time Nadal is preserving his status as a drama critic. Chapman urged other drama critics now withering in other cities to follow Nadal's example. This week a Cleveland "Show Train" was announced.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Even when the plays may not justify it, Watts, Post, likes the hint of the audience revolt and its implications. Playgoers in increasing numbers are beginning to question the critics. Many approach T.S. Eliot plamming to be confused, notes Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun.

PRO BENEFITS... Wailers, accusers and bleaters who attack theatre benefits in general are graceless and ungallant, points out Burr, Playbill. The various organizations concerned can hardly be blamed for collecting funds in as painless manner as possible. The manager of the play can hardly be blamed for selling blocks of tickets to the charities on both moral and practical grounds. The manager has a very real and grave duty to those who have entrusted him with their hard-earned cash.

COLUMN TIPS... "Gayest" theatre-goers in town flocking to The Immoralist, whispers Kilgallen... Los Angeles Philharmonic Hall will become a Baptist Church, reports Sullivan... Bullfight management promises actors a cut in any picture sale, hears Hawkins, WT&S.

LERNER ON GIDE... Post political columnist Max Lerner states that the Gide novel, The Immoralist, and the skillful Goetz adaption of it, have nothing of the "message" about them. Gide wrote his novel after his own discovery of his true sexual impulses in North Africa. He tried to tell in his book about his fumbling efforts not to hurt the wife he loved, about the conflict of guilt and a defiant inverted sensuality. Much of it comes through in the play, which handles the theme with both power and delicacy.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Maurice Valency, adaptor of Giraudoux plays, doesn't expect to make a career out of the one French playwright, he told Rice, Post. But he would like to do The Trojan War Will Not Take Place. The Columbia professor does admit to thinking that the Frenchman is the greatest dramatist of our time.

Pros & Cons by TMK

"CD" Gift Coupon

The Winner presents a pleasant group of slightly wordy characters who get lost in Elmer Rice's mixture of part court room mystery and part bedroom comedy... Ondine is a delightful, beautiful, witty fantasy-fairy tale in which Audrey Hepburn's contagious enchantment is caught by everyone on both sides of the footlights... Wise Have Not Spoken is a superbly acted, perfectly produced harsh modern Irish drama.

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Theatre producers and unions should join together in a determined effort to solve, or at least discuss, current stage problems, union representatives urged at "Drama Desk" luncheon. In the past the wage talks have failed, they noted, mostly because the managers were not interested enough to attend the meetings. Abe Savage, public relations director of Local 803 American Federation of Musicians, Solly Pernick, business agent, Local 1 Stagehands Union, Milton Weintraub and Wolfe Kaufman, of Association of Theatrical Press agents and Managers answered questions brought up by the recent Times series on "featherbedding" by Murray Schumuck. Weintraub, urging a positive view be taken of the theatre, stated that the main problem of the theatre is discussing such topics as "What's wrong with the theatre."

#### Plays

Mademoiselle Colombe will close Feb 27...Burning Bright will open at Longacre March 4 starring Cedric Hardwicke in the Charles Morgan drama...Lullaby will give 2 Sunday performances, dropping Monday evening and Wednesday matinee performances... On Your Toes will be revived next season by George Abbott and Richard Rodgers... Pygmalion in a musical version may be presented in London...Sabrina Fair midnight performance for Equity Welfare Fund was held Feb 20.

#### People

Carol Channing has been signed to replace Rosalind Russell in Wonderful Town starting April 5...Henry Fonda will leave Caine Mutiny Court Martial May 31 to film Mister Roberts...John Raitt, not Ralph Meeker, will co-star in The Pajama Game... Mary Martin will play in Peter Pan in San Francisco starting July 19...Eva Gabor will star in Aldrich-Myers production of Sailor's Delight in April.

#### Theatre Record Notes

Kurt Weill's Three Penny Opera Suite has been released by MGM Records...Girl in Pink Tights original cast album will be made by Columbia.

#### Theatre Film Notes

Jane Russell and Clark Gable will co-star in film version of Guys and Dolls... Katharine Hepburn to make film version of The Millionairess in London.

#### Theatre TV Notes

NBC TV Comedy Hour Feb 28 features Ethel Merman, Bert Lahr in Anything Goes... Tom Helmore, The Winner, and Neva Patterson, Seven Year Itch, will co-star in TV film series of "The Shadow" ...Aug 3 US Steel Theatre will feature Wally Cox in Three Men on a Horse.

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